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TITLE: Project Secrets: Evaluation of a Theatre-based HIV Intervention

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BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES: Adolescents commonly report participation in risky sexual behaviors, which may increase the likelihood of HIV infection. Effective HIV prevention programs for teens are in demand. The objective of the current study was to determine if the AIDS prevention knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intentions of 8th grade students who view a play entitled Secrets are different from the knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intentions of 8th grade students in a waitlist control condition.

METHODS: Participants for the present study included 8th grade students at 12 schools within a large metropolitan school system. Data were collected at three time points over the course of a school semester. Measures included HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitudes about using condoms and teens having sex, self-efficacy to resist peer pressure, intentions to practice safer sex, and a brief sexual history. Data were collected in a randomized cluster design in which schools were randomly assigned to conditions (play versus control). Because this was a mixed design (with fixed and random effects), SAS Proc MIXED module was used to model the fixed effects of condition, and the random effects of schools in a repeated measure ANOVA analysis.

RESULTS: Preliminary analyses indicated no main effects or interaction effects for attitudes or behavior but statistically significant results were found for knowledge and self-efficacy. With regard to knowledge, the results indicated a significant effect of treatment ($F(1, 242) = 27.37, p = .0001$), a significant effect of time: $F(2, 2698) = 10.46, p = .0001$, and a significant treatment by time interaction: $F(2, 2698) = 4.57, p = .01$. With regard to self-efficacy, the results indicated a significant effect of time: $F(2, 3096) = 10.14, p = .0001$ with both the treatment and control groups increasing in self-efficacy over time. No other effects were significant at the .05 level.

CONCLUSIONS: Students in the treatment group showed somewhat higher knowledge at baseline, increased their knowledge following the play, and maintained higher levels of knowledge at two month follow up in comparison to students in the control group. In addition, a modest increase in self-efficacy was evident between both the treatment and control groups. As a cure for HIV is yet to be discovered and adolescents continue to engage in risky sexual behaviors, prevention efforts must continue among this at risk group.

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